

**James Madison to James Monroe, April 9, 1786.
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TO JAMES MONORE. MAD. MSS.

Orange April 9th, 1786.

Dear Sir, —I am favoured with yours of the 18th of March. My last answered your preceding one relating to your territorial speculation. I hope it has been recd. I forgot to intimate to you, though I presume it would have been superfluous, that it will be well in every purchase to ascertain by information as far as possible, the proportion of land which lies on the river and comes within the description of low grounds. The value of every tract depends much on this proportion. The contiguous upland is I believe generally of good soil, but there must be both degrees & exceptions to its quality. The low grounds are in a manner uniformly & universally good. The step taken by N. Jersey was certainly a rash one, and will furnish fresh pretexts to unwilling States for withholdg their contributions.¹ In one point of view however it furnishes a

¹ “Jersey having taken into consideration the late requisition, the house of delegates resolv'd that having enter'd into the confederation upon terms highly disadvantageous to that state, from the necessity of public Affrs. at the time, and a confidence that those points in which they were aggriev'd wou. be remedied and finding this was not the case and a compact founded in such unequal principles likely, by their acquiescence to be fetter'd, on them, they wou. not therefore comply with the same until their grievances were redress'd.”—Monroe to Madison, March 19, 1786.— *Writings of Monroe*, i., 124.

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salutary lesson. Is it possible with such an example before our eyes of impotency in the federal system, to remain sceptical with regard to the necessity of infusing more energy into it? A Government cannot long stand which is obliged in the ordinary course of its administration to court a compliance with its *constitutional* acts, from a member not of the most powerful order, situated within the immediate verge of authority, and apprised of every circumstance which should remonstrate against disobedience. The question whether it be possible and worth while to preserve the Union of the States must be speedily decided some way or other. Those who are indifferent to its preservation would do well to look forward to the consequences of its extinction. The prospect to my eye is a gloomy one indeed. I am glad to hear that the opposition to the impost is likely to be overcome. It is an encouragement to persevere in good measures. I am afraid at the same time that like other auxiliary resources it will be overrated by the States, and slacken the regular efforts of taxation. It is also materially short of the power which Congress ought to have with regard to Trade. It leaves the door unshut agst a commercial warfare among

the States, our trade exposed to foreign machinations, and the distresses of an unfavorable balance very little checked. The experience of European Merchts who have speculated in our trade will probably check in a great measure, our opportunities of consuming beyond our resources; but they will continue to credit us as far as our coin in addition to our productions will extend, and our experience here teaches us that our people will extend their consumption as far as credit can be obtained.